

for Bradley Williams to read
in case I have to leave

It is looking like I might not have time

**Annie Bukacek MD, Internal Medicine Physician in Kalispell
Presented to Montana Senate Judiciary Committee 2/11/13**

1. Doctors are often wrong when they predict life expectancy. I have witnessed many examples of this including a physician friend who was estimated having 6 months to live after breast cancer metastasized to her lungs. She is still alive 15 years later, still has a medical practice, still playing tennis. Statistical analysis with the probability of dying within a certain period of time is based on data compiled from patients with similar illness. The lifespan of countless individuals exceed their statistical probability. If assisted suicide becomes legal, there will be Montanans who kill themselves who could have many quality years, maybe a normal lifespan.
2. Assisted suicide is totally different from palliation of pain which is both legal and effective in alleviating suffering. The heart-felt, tragic stories we hear about in support of assisted suicide were caused by inadequate palliation of pain, not the need for these patients to kill themselves.
3. Proponents of assisted suicide talk about the right to refuse treatment. Refusing treatment is not the same as killing yourself.
4. Elder abuse is real and will proliferate if SB 220 becomes law. Over the years, I have been witness to countless examples of greed in the battle for my patient's inheritance. I see cases on a fairly regular basis of my patients being taken advantage of for financial gain, usually by family members but not always. One was the case of a young man who took advantage of the loneliness of an older female patient of mine. He obtained financial control over this woman by feigning romantic interest in her and isolating her from her family. By the time Adult Protective Services provided her a guardian, thousands of dollars had been siphoned. The same motive of greed could lead to coerced assisted suicide if there was anticipated financial gain, and death could occur quickly, before protection could be put in place.

